

where this identity is directly threatened by "non-Indian influences" (40-41). Thus we can look at music and dance as they operate both within and between groups of American Indians and see some different though related functions being achieved in regard to individual and group identities.

Central to Powers's presentation is the conviction that Plains Indian music and dance are not remnants of a dying culture. They are rather vibrant expressions of an ongoing tradition which has roots in the past and which, as all aspects of cultural systems, is constantly changing. With no apologies for my pun, Powers's viewpoint is upbeat. In his words, "What we are witnessing today in the form of tribal and intertribal events is not so much a revival or revitalization as it is a *vitalization* of American Indian culture" (159). This conclusion could no doubt be applied with profit to many other human groups as well.

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Robert Rotenberg and Gary McDonogh, eds. *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Space*. (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1993) 224 pp., \$16.95 paper.

The chapters presented here are searching for the basis for ascribing social and cultural values to the cityscape and the built urban environment.

So begins *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Space*, a compilation of urban case studies edited by Robert Rotenberg, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the International Studies Program at DePaul University, and Gary W. McDonogh, Visiting Professor and Director of the Growth and Structure of Cities Program at Bryn Mawr. These twelve very diverse chapters attempt to understand the construction of an urban landscape from the cultural and social perspectives of those groups that experience and manipulate the landscape. It is the "discourses" of those groups that give meaning and structure to the landscape:

A discourse focuses on a subset of experiences for a group within a large body of social experiences. The idea of discourse enables us to break up the unwieldy idea of culture into smaller, definable units. Each set relates to particular groups of people, such as conquistadors, urban planners, commercial developers, gardeners or neighborhood residents. As people participate in the

discourse, they act on their understanding to disproportionately shape to their purpose the urban places they control. (Introduction, xvi)

Architects, urban designers and developers are often trapped within their own cultural frames of reference, designing for others according to their own discourse, or assumption, of the way the world works. This book helps to dispel the notion that things ought to be a certain way by showing a multitude of discourses that sometimes are at odds with each other, politically, socially, and culturally. It is in this complex "noise" that cities are born and grow. The designers of contemporary urban environments must learn that the urban cannot be designed using utopian, formally-universal rules that transcend cultural and societal needs, without manipulating those rules to the specific needs of those who live in the urban place.

The various chapters, most of them originally presented as papers in a 1990 American Anthropological Meeting, show how complex and socially political the design of the urban environment is. The book is divided into three sections, each looking at the urban environment at a different scale. The first section, "Language of Place," addresses the relationship of language and the meaning of place to those groups that live and experience the urban environment. The papers in this section ask the questions: Who controls the use of space? Who controls the meaning of space? What are the correct or incorrect contents of a space?

Gary McDonogh addresses many of these questions in "The Geography of Emptiness." The many different cultural definitions of "vacant" and "empty" are explored using case studies of Barcelona and Savannah, Georgia. Each group using the same space has a different notion as to what the space means and what it can contain. The residents of a neighborhood and the homeless have different attitudes regarding the use of a local park, and the question arises: Who controls the use and meaning of the park?

The second section, "Place in the City," looks at the interrelationship between various conditions within the urban environment. Donald S. Pitkin reminds us that the meaning of a space is socially constructed. In field studies of Mediterranean outdoor life, he makes note of how the street in provincial Italian towns becomes an extension of the indoor residence. The street is demarcated by chairs and other furniture brought from inside the adjacent houses. The universal notion of the "public" and the "private" becomes blurred, the street becoming a kind of "open air Salotto, during the ritual passeggiatta, the stroll up and down in the hour before dinner, when everyone has the chance to offer a presentation of self and perform an assessment of the presentation of others" (98).

The final section of the book, "Planning and Responses," is about the application of urban planning processes, and the impact of that application on the meaning of the urban environment. The economic driven attitudes among most developers and planners is "if we build it (culture) they will come." Margaret Rodman rejects this idea, proposing that the urban is a product of human culture. She advocates experience-based approaches to constructing urbanism, designed according to the discourse of those involved.

The importance of this volume is not in the recitation of the statistics, facts, and figures of the various case studies, but in the realization of the complexities of urban design for those who construct the urban environment. This book should be used to educate against the creeping intolerance for situations or discourse that do not agree with "our own." It helps to broaden the discourse about what we can do to design contemporary environments that will be flexible and tolerant of differing points of view. It is only then that the designer of a city can change his or her attitudes about the single-minded design of the city and search for methods of urban development and design that can compliment the diverse groups that make up and give meaning to the urban environment.

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Juan Suarez. *Contra El Viento: Una Historia de Lucha y Amor*. (Orlando, FL: Edicionces Suagar, 1991) 470 pp., \$19.95.

Contra El Viento (Against the Wind) is an autobiography that reads like a novel. This biographical narrative is divided into four parts. The novel itself uses the device of a writer-narrator who pieces together the history of his life from the moment of his birth to the most difficult times, now being faced by the Suarez family as they confront the most daily grueling demands and special attention from a beloved member of the family, who suffers from Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

This is a bold and enthralling story which grasps the interest of the reader from beginning to end. In the first two sections the writer-narrator chronicles all the important moments in the life of the protagonist, Juan Suarez, from the moment of his birth passing through his early childhood and early adolescence, and the very important moment in his life when he meets Carmen, the love of his life. The writer-narrator harps on all his strategies to make sure that he gets the approval and respect of Carmen's family. At the same time Juan works very hard to establish a reputation as a young, intelligent,